

THE MUSICAL MAGAZINE.

NO. LIX.

BOSTON, SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1841.

Hints upon a Rational Method of Instruction for Teachers of Music generally, with special Application to the Piano Forte, by Conrad Berg.

[TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN FOR THE MUSICAL MAGAZINE.]

(Continued from p. 90.)

All these remarks relate exclusively to the *mechanical* part of piano playing. It now remains only to speak of its spirit, namely,

8. *Of Expression.*

In order to present in the best manner possible the idea of *expression* on the piano forte, it will not be superfluous to make some inquiries in relation to the spirit of this instrument.

What is the true spirit of piano playing, in the present state of the art? It is richness of tone and fulness of harmony,—(this last must not be confounded with the structure of notes and the accumulation of chords.) Accordingly, that which in the most clear and powerful manner brings out this richness is expression. And thus, the requisites for obtaining this are, 1. A full, clear, and uniform touch; 2. A round and distinct performance; 3. What the French call *aplomb*, that is, a well filled out, well-sustained time and an accurate

concurrence of both hands ; 4. A close observance of all the designated shades of expression, *forte*, *piano*, *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, *legato* and *staccato*, and the like. As the opposite of all this one must avoid, 1. A hard, faint or unequal touch, which is occasioned by a bad, drooping manner of holding the hand or by a strained or excessively cramped position of the fingers ; 2. A forced, interrupted, or embarrassed mode of playing ; 3. A hurried, imperfect [defective] time, and the striking of one hand after the other ; 4. Unnecessary useless, shades of expression.

It is a very erroneous idea, that one must himself invent shades of expression in order to play with taste. The best expression is always that prescribed by the author himself, studied with care, and rendered with feeling. The highest beauty, so far as it respects piano playing, depends upon the touch, and the round, distinct manner of playing and the *aplomb*.

In the close study of a piece of music, it is desirable not to wait until the end before engaging in giving the expression ; but as soon as the individual passages can be performed with some degree of pureness and certainty, one should endeavor to carry along with his exercise the appropriate expression. Indeed it very frequently happens, that only by closely attending to this last and only by a good touch, and by playing roundly the remaining improvements yet to be made are more clearly perceived and apprehended, and in this way only every thing is brought to its full maturity.

In increasing and diminishing passages (*crescendo* and *diminuendo*) it is advisable, not to commence the expression too early, for in that case nothing would be left for the close. In introductory passages also, provided they are without accompaniment and lead to a melody, one may allow himself a little retardation ; still this must be done with care and feeling, and never at the expense of the time, that is to say, in such a manner that it would thereby become unintelligible. In like manner also in melodious passages, in the case of rising and falling of the notes, slight retardations are again admissible, but yet this likewise must be done with all possible discretion, and never one measure be made longer or shorter than the other.

§ 3. *Application of these Rules.*

Of the particulars which have been given, the four first are sufficient to bring out a piece of music without any serious fault, and indeed, they contain much also that is adapted to improve one on

the points which follow. The four others relate to the more perfect refinement in playing.

Both the first particulars, *succession* and *time*, can always be practised in connexion; but yet it is well clearly to separate and distinguish the two ideas from one another, because the case often occurs in which each must be investigated and rectified individually. In like manner also, can the two following particulars, *the striking of the notes and fingering*, sometimes be treated in connexion: still it is better to accomplish each separately.

If a piece is not very long, one may go completely through it, and each time go successively over all these points.

The whole at once in connexion is always preferable to the successive addition of its separate parts. But provided the piece be too long, it must be divided up into two or more parts, and each individual part formed into one whole, and these again must be joined together. But one must here carefully observe that one or another of these parts be not inferior to the rest in expertness, certainty and ease.

SECOND DIVISION.

COURSE OF INSTRUCTION IN GENERAL.

§ 4. *The method to be adopted in the case of each scholar, according to the degree of his present attainments.*

The inquiry will be made, To whom are the foregoing precepts adapted? What degree of skill do they presuppose, in order to be applied with advantage?

It is true, indeed, that they are not designed for new beginners, but for those who, with some degree of natural talent, have already enjoyed from one and a half to two years of instruction, and have thus become fully possessed of the elementary principles of music.

A small experiment which I shall hereafter make in a method of elementary instruction, will show how far the latter stands connected with the foregoing method. I only wish, however, that every commencement in music might uniformly be made with singing; and for this purpose, as it seems to me, the most suitable means are singing schools, on the plan of mutual instruction, as they exist in several cities of France. There is so infinitely much depending upon a fundamental elementary instruction, that neither parents nor

learners can ever be sufficiently made aware of the importance of this point; and in order to save time, trouble and expense hereafter, and at the same time to ensure the fact of the pupil's learning far more and with far more permanency, this part of the instruction should not be passed over negligently.

Musical instruction is yet so imperfect and so destitute of plan, that many, both of teachers and scholars, do not really know what properly belongs to it. How often do we hear it said of a bad teacher, *He will do well enough for the beginning*;—just as if one could erect a good house upon a bad foundation! Most persons perceive this mistake only when it is too late. It is true, indeed, that good teachers seldom feel the disposition or the vocation to trouble themselves with first beginners, and, moreover, the private instruction of such an one, would for many individuals be too expensive. Such being the case, the difficulty should be relieved by a completion of the elementary instruction in particular schools, to be established for the purpose, so that a subsequent teacher would have nothing to do but to teach the use of the fingers. And for this purpose, a teacher needs, in order to give his pupils a high degree of advancement, no great ability in the art, but only a knowledge of the right method.

When I reflect how very much the learning of every knowledge, as for example, that of the languages, is abridged and reduced by the adoption of better systems of instruction, I am led to inquire why a similar abridgment might not be adopted in the learning of music also,—a thing, moreover, which has a far greater charm for a learner, than any other art or science?

The present plan of instruction, accordingly, is adapted only for those scholars who, already acquainted perfectly with the rudiments, are able to play tolerably well an easy sonata of Pleyel, perhaps, or the more easy pieces of Clementi, or others of a similar character. Even in the case of such, one will find that he has enough to do to make them fully acquainted with the ideas of succession, measure, striking the notes, and fingering; so that in this stage of the business, nothing can be said with respect to more advanced and higher perfection. There are, however, certain prominent defects, such, for example, as a bad manner of holding the hands and fingers; a hard, loose mode of playing, and the like, which can never be left out of attention, without thereby interrupting at the same time the process prescribed in the foregoing observations. Moreover,

let the teacher take pains to become acquainted with the principal faults of his pupil, and then incessantly labor to remove them.

The inquiry will be made, then, What are these principal faults? Are they very numerous? By no means. The most frequent are, the want of attention, of memory, of patience, and the want of a really good will, in consequence of which many hindering, and useless repetitions become necessary in order to get any thing into the head or into the fingers. Let the teacher endeavor to bring out and attend to the points just given, and he will find an entirely different result from what he would in case he should attempt immediate succession, to correct the faults of inaccurate time, false notes, and bad fingering.

The ideas in relation to time, the performance of notes, and the use of the fingers, are by no means so numerous or so intricate but that they may be brought together in certain general remarks, whose application may immediately be made in practice. It is best, for example, in the case of light and volatile minds, to act upon the development of a steadily increased attention; in that of the forgetful, to aim at the improvement of the memory; in that of the reflective but slow in motion, to produce immediate striking of the correct notes; in that of the hasty, to impose a constant check; in that of the inactive and slow to be moved, to adopt an incessant course of pushing or driving on; and, finally, it is necessary that those who are unduly destitute of feeling should be inspired with sensibility.

In order to render my meaning the more intelligible, I will endeavor to show in what species of faults each of these characteristics exhibits itself. The light and volatile usually throw every thing into confusion; they very frequently play and practise without thought and without effect. The forgetful are always committing the same mistakes, and in a manner they acquire a perfect certainty in their faults. The reflecting but slow of performance, are deficient in an ever ready apprehension and rendering of a thing,—qualities which, however, are among the most material to those who practise music. The hasty have not a due command either of their mind or of their fingers, and hence they are in the habit of falling from one bad habit into another. The indolent and slow in motion never acquire any degree of dexterity without being driven to it. Those who are destitute of feeling may indeed do every thing accurately, but still they do it as if they were playing for day-wages.

It would be idle to aim at the cultivation of an actual talent while

a ye textisting, much greater fault, would nullify and undo every thing.

§ 5. *The manner of procedure at the Lesson.*

One of the most difficult problems for the teacher is indisputably that of so dividing and regulating the hour of instruction, that each one shall secure some advantage, and none be entirely lost.

In the first place, let the teacher endeavor to produce in the scholar a clear idea of what he does, and then to teach him to judge his own performances.

When, for example, the teacher commences the instruction of a new scholar, let him play before him some piece which he has already learned, then require from him a judgment upon what he has just performed himself, and endeavor then to teach the ideas of succession, time, the striking of notes, fingering, &c., as they have already been presented, so far as an error may have been committed against the one or the other of these requisitions. Then, if the instruction is once fairly entered upon, and a new piece is to be learned, let it be done according to the principles already laid down, yet with every special care that too serious a task be not imposed upon the scholar at once, but still one sufficiently so as to afford him materials for his own personal investigation and exercise. I have always observed, that the most difficult things for most scholars are to play in succession, to count aloud and correctly, to bestow the principal attention upon the left hand, and especially, to play and practise slow. But if the scholar is once familiar with these things, and is able to make use of them to some advantage, every thing will go comparatively easy. If one or more exercises are completed, then let the teacher each time commence the hour of instruction, by making the pupil play to him the pieces which he has learned. Let the teacher then, however, make no remarks upon the performance, but let the scholar do this himself; and let him not begin with his until the scholar is no longer able to make any of his own.

That teacher adopts a very erroneous course of procedure, who at the commencement of a lesson interrupts and censures the scholar in the case of every fault that is committed. No good at all is done in this way. The scholar neither learns to play in succession, nor to collect himself, nor to exercise his judgment, and the same faults will occur the next time. If, then, the direction just given be observed, the teacher will endeavor to bring the scholar to fix his attention

upon the principal fault, but always according to the classification already exhibited, in order that he remove it immediately, or at least examine and analyze it. If there is left sufficient time after that for other and less important mistakes, let the same course be pursued in relation to them. I must add, however, that the principal fault is always that which appears in the earlier items of the foregoing series, e. g. repetition and stopping are worse than a fault in time, the latter worse than incorrect notes, and these again are worse than bad fingering. Thus each of these faults would be the principal fault.

It would be wrong, moreover, should the teacher, after he had caused the exercise to be played to him, in the manner proposed above, and then had questioned the scholar in relation to it, attempt to examine and improve each passage, one after another, as they successively occur. In this way it frequently happens, that at the close of the lesson, perhaps scarcely half of the necessary instructions have been communicated, and still the principal faults remain, after all; while, by the other mode of procedure, the correction of the principal fault often results in the minor one's being removed at the same time.

But each fault must be removed by the help of the teacher only to a certain extent; for otherwise the lesson degenerates into an hour of exercise, instead of being merely the preparation for the same. That ought to be done only when the scholar is no longer able to help himself.

The most difficult moment in the hour of instruction is its *close*. That is to say, if it is to be ended so as to be useful in preparing the way for a good exercise, it must not be closed with a mere general recommendation, to practise well, nor still less merely with an unmeaning bow of the teacher, but that which has just been done or omitted must once more be briefly represented, a general survey of the proposed future exercise must be given, and as far as possible a general hint suggested, whose adoption is to be proved in the next lesson. The principal thing for a teacher is to introduce into his instruction the happiest possible mode of connection.

§ 6. *Personal Exercise.*

There is nothing more difficult in acquiring a musical education than to practise in a *proper manner*. This is the thing by which progress is either accelerated or retarded. The most important affair in the case is, that the teacher endeavor to present before the

scholar a perfectly clear idea of what he does, what he ought to do, and what he ought to avoid.

In every other art where a model, or otherwise a visible image is exhibited, it is easy for the learner to compare his copy with it; the visible appearance shows one sufficiently what he has done and what he still has to do; while in *musical* exercise no other image lies before one's view than that simply which is formed in the power of the imagination or in feeling, and when the exercise is ended, it often seems as if a veil had been drawn over it which conceals all that has been done.

Hence it is evident, that only by the increased exertion of the imagination, of feeling, and of an active, wakeful attention truly good exercises may be produced. But if these faculties of the mind are really developed, how entirely different is the success of an exercise!

It is an erroneous idea, that one must daily exercise *just so many hours*, in order to make perceptible progress. It ought rather to be said, that one must daily exercise *just so well*, in order to make proficiency. A quarter of an hour, judiciously applied, gives by far a farther advancement than a whole hour played through in a thoughtless and mechanical manner. It is indeed true, that a *longer* exercise, provided it be good, will always advance one farther than a *shorter* one; but the sacrifice of time, demanded by the mechanism of music is, by no means so great as is sometimes imagined, and it becomes less and less in proportion as the mental development in the case advances. To exercise for many hours or half a day can be of advantage only to those who, for the want of a better judgment, have no other way of finding the right pint than by approaching it through a slow process of incessant attempts and repetitions; just as a laborer, in pursuit of an object concealed in the earth, is indeed sure to find it if he digs over a sufficiently large extent of surface on every side of him, while, at the same time, with a more accurate knowledge he might perhaps have hit upon the lost object with but a little digging. If the exercise is to be productive of improvement, and this is to be accomplished at the same time with the least possible loss of time, it can only be done when there shall be in every thing a gradual development.

What, then, would such a gradual development be? I think it depends upon the following things:—

1. To do something, whether it be well or ill done.

2. To do the same thing in a manner somewhat less faulty.
3. To do it constantly better, and then
4. At last, to do it perfectly well.

These four points, carried out into practice in the course of the hour of instruction or of exercise, would be something as follows :

The first point is the mere playing off, whether well or ill—the former of course, as much as possible—provided it only goes along and does not sound too bad.

The second is the same playing off, though with the avoidance of the faults detected in the former. If one can effect such an avoidance by a mere playing off, this is altogether preferable to the particular practice of individual passages. Still time also must be saved in doing this, and a correct feeling will easily find the measure.

The third point, as a perceptible improvement, relates to the removing, or the surmounting of individual difficulties.

Then the fourth is the arranging together of every individual improvement into one perfect whole. Thus it is a *good performance* in one complete connection.

The transition from the utterly bad performance to the less faulty, to the better, and, at last, to the perfectly good performance, can be effected by a constant playing off, provided, however, that this be done always more and more slow, and one always undertakes less than before *at a time*. If then, some one thing be perfectly well done, though the performance be extremely slow, then let one do another in the same manner, and then let him attempt to unite the two, and then to perform well and still more in connection—which is always possible, if one continues to play slow. If, then, the whole is well performed, one may attempt to play the piece a little quicker, partly in order to be able to play with more rapidity, partly, by this more rapid playing, to discern the more clearly the still existing faults and the improvements still wanting, and to attend to them.

Accordingly, the design of the hour of instruction and of exercise is to secure the following results :—

1. To learn to read *correctly* and *with facility*.
2. To discern and determine upon faults *with clearness and accuracy*.
3. *Certainly and perfectly* to divest oneself of them and to become possessed of skill.
4. Out of all the individual things to form *one whole*, and in all to acquire an equal degree of ability and feeling.

One may easily see, that such a course is not only possible, but even that it cannot fail of success; provided one only pursues a constant transition from a general examination to something more specific until he comes at last to the most minute analysis; and then, reverting the process, goes back again from the nicest analysis with a constant addition of individual improvements, until finally he arrives at the complete and comprehensive whole.

It is true, indeed, that such a dissection and analytical mode of prosecuting study is not always an affair to be accomplished at a single exercise, and that it often requires many of them, before one can perceive with certainty every fault. But at any rate, it is the most certain way, readily and fundamentally to attain the object.

I must here add a remark for the purpose of raising and sustaining the courage of many a truly zealous scholar. It very frequently happens, that after an exercise of several hours' length, one supposes himself to have pretty well conquered the difficulties, and that, after playing through repeatedly, this really seems to be the case; while, on the following day, he scarcely succeeds half as well as before in performing the very same piece. In consequence of this the scholar often torments himself and suspects that his time and labor have been lost. By a little calm reflection, however, it will easily be seen, that to-day's success by no means gives any pledge for a perfect acquisition, and that to-morrow's failure is far from demonstrating a perfect deterioration. The former was rather the result of a temporary impulse—a momentary excitement of the dexterity of the fingers, while the latter is to be regarded rather as the true degree of advancement in skill, at which one has arrived. Indeed, it is very possible that even the next exercise will not be sufficient to bring him right. It is *time* only, and that too combined with care, courage and perseverance, that can carry one forward to a full maturity.

(To be continued.)

BIOGRAPHY.

C. F. S. FASCH.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, FOR THE MAGAZINE.

Charles Frederick Christian Fasch—the founder of the Academy of Singing in Berlin. The life of this worthy man furnishes the

singular instance of an active, quiet usefulness, void of all pretence yet blessed by success, the full importance and extent of which no contemporary could foresee—himself least of all, since he only followed, without far-reaching plans, the impulse of the moment, or rather, he followed unconsciously the higher directions of his Maker.

Fasch was born on the 18th of November, 1736. Being in feeble health from his infancy, he was treated with great indulgence, and his mind was not much troubled by school studies. It was however accidentally discovered that the quiet boy, probably induced by his father's example, had composed several pieces of music and practised them on the piano during his father's absence. This induced the latter to give him instruction on the violin. His health improved by a residence in the country, and he was allowed to be present at the performances at court, and in the church. The solemnity of these latter performances greatly excited the most secret chord of his young heart; a sacred composition by Zelenka, which he heard performed a few years afterwards in Dresden, under the direction of his father, wrought his feelings up to such a pitch, that his father, fearing he might be induced by it to embrace the Roman Catholic faith, did not allow him to hear it a second time.

The young Fasch practised the pianoforte and organ, he acquired good knowledge in the science of composition, wrote many sacred and instrumental compositions, and became particularly expert in accompanying solo pieces and vocal compositions in a very neat, expressive manner, closely blending the accompaniment with the principal part; by which art he gained the good will of the Prussian concert master, Franz Benda. On his recommendation, he was called in 1756, by Frederick the Great, into his service, as musician of his chapel, and pianist, with the daily duty of accompanying on the pianoforte his flute concertos and solos, alternately changing this office, once in four weeks, with C. P. E. Bach. The seven years' war interrupted these duties, and his very inconsiderable salary (300 Prussian dollars—about \$200) was still more diminished. Fasch was therefore obliged to increase it by giving lessons in music. This came hard to him, and feeble health increased the troubles. He composed much, but scrupulously conscientious, he destroyed it all. He could not bear the idea of taking pay for a composition that did not please himself; and thus he lost much valuable time and the courage necessary to succeed.

He began, therefore, to isolate himself, and to confine his activity to his necessary professional labors; but his mind wanted occupation, and not having found a distinct direction or avocation, he busied himself with trifles of the most singular kind. Thus he kept a list of all the European armies and navies, their generals and admirals, their single regiments and ships, and their destination; he built, for years, the most artificial card palaces. In the morning, after the breakfast, he first examined himself, to see whether his mind

was in the right disposition for work. To prove this, he multiplied eight, twelve, and more ciphers with each other, and made the trial of the product; if he found he had made a mistake, he was unfit for work, fidgeting during the whole day, and suppressed, as much as possible, every thought of music. When he was prevented from going out, he amused himself alone by playing the game of "grande patience," using four packs of cards. He composed during this time many very artfully contrived canons, among others, one for twenty-five parts; he said, "artists ought to make themselves acquainted with these tricks of art, because the greatest composers of former times had adorned their works with them:" he could not help acknowledging, however, that this exercise but too often degenerates into idle trifling, and himself dissuaded Kirnberger from similar exercises.

However persevering these studies were, however conscientiously he prepared himself for his lessons, composing for his pupils thousands of very suitable examples to the rules of thoroughbass, we cannot deny that, nevertheless, he missed his true avocation; we see a mind gifted by nature with much life and spirit, lost in a sort of busy idleness, without any fixed avocation, without any distinct direction. We may well call this idleness, though very different from that of laziness and neglect of duty, a *hard trial*, from which there is no hope of release, except in that courage, which christian submission gives. But in this spirit, soon the light of the long hidden; nay, it may be, only now created true avocation of our existence, will rise gloriously, or mildly gleam to us through our gradually increasing conceptions of it.

This consolation was in store for the solitary, isolated Fasch. He could not derive it from his office, nor from the great world without, in his humble, retiring disposition of mind. Although he directed for two years, until Reichardt's appointment in 1776, the opera at the pianoforte, taking the office of chapel-master; although in 1792 he undertook the arrangement of the opera, *Vasco di Gama*, in which every singer introduced his own favorite air; although he played an organ fugue, composed for the occasion, at Frederick's funeral celebration, yet his official activity and influence was fast waning, as it ever had only excited a small portion of his inherent power.

On one occasion, in 1783, his old predilection for church music, for an artfully contrived composition in many parts, was again inflamed. Reichardt brought home from Italy among other compositions, a mass in sixteen parts, by Orazio Benevoli. Fasch copied the score for his own use and study. The more he looked into it, the livelier rose his hope and purpose of accomplishing a similar work. In the score of the Italian master, he found liberties, which were not necessarily required, however difficult it must be to carry through such a composition, and the whole appeared, where it was composed in more than four parts, merely a monotonous play of in-

verted intervals, without modulation, although it was very regular and artful. Fasch considered, that above all things, each of the choirs of such a work, should be perfectly correct in its own relations; but that also the four choirs should stand in the same proportion to each other as the four single parts of a composition in four parts. He completes the new mass in sixteen parts, in a few weeks; the last fugue of sixteen parts in two days. He invites the royal vocalists and other singers in Potsdam to assist in bringing it out. They readily attend three times; but their good will is insufficient to insure success, for they do not understand the true style of performing church music. The singing choirs in Berlin are called upon, and attend the rehearsals in the church with great zeal, but all in vain. All the attempts fail; the work appears to be a total failure, and even the better musicians consider it impracticable. It had not yet found its proper soil.

(To be continued.)

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TERM, "PLAYING AT SIGHT."

J. J. Rousseau, in his "Musical Dictionary," has but few words on this subject, which deserve to be more fully developed. The explanation given by him is simply this: To read *à livre ouvert, ad aperturam libri*; or to play *à la première vue, a prima vista, at sight*, are synonymous expressions."

Nothing delights the vulgar so much as a performer who can play at first sight, and who sits down to execute any piece of music whatever with imperturbable assurance. In the eye of a connoisseur, however, such an off-hand player will pass for no more than he really is—and what is that? Why, generally, a mere *croquet*, to use Rousseau's expressive term, and which, for want of a better word, we will translate *note-grinder*, a man of mere mechanism, who can decipher at first view what he would be unable to understand after the hundredth attempt. Mechanically speaking, I prefer the automaton of Maelzel to your first-rate decipherer of notes, who, vain of the facility he has acquired, sits down unprepared to execute the masterpieces of the first composers, as if such works required no previous study or examination in order to enter into their style and investigate their character. What should we think of the pedant who should undertake to recite from Homer or Sophocles without having previously read the composition, and thus enabled himself to form a general idea, at least, of the subject and manner of treating it?

Speaking of those who play at first sight, Grétry thus expresses himself: "Many persons gain the credit of being able to perform perfectly at sight; but I declare that I never met with such a phe-

nomenon, unless where the music was of the easy kind and written in the prevailing taste of the day ; or perhaps, to speak more clearly, every-day music. I am aware that the man who has to support the title of a performer at sight displays all the hardihood of one sure of his object. But let us remember that it is the author whom he ought to satisfy, and not the hearers who are ignorant of the true character and expression of a work, the execution of which they believe to be ably accomplished merely because it is boldly got through."

We will adduce a few examples to show how apprehensive some great virtuosi have been lest they should commit themselves by playing at first sight, aware how much more forcibly great names speak than mere dry precepts.

The violinist, Lamotte, was an able performer at sight. With the view of putting his skill to the test, the celebrated Jarnowick proposed that they should play a concerted piece together. "Agreed," said Lamotte, "provided you will allow me to make you a proposal in return. It is, to bring me afterwards a concerto of your composition, and I will produce one of mine ; we will make an interchange, you shall perform mine and I yours." Jarnowick no doubt found the proposal rather hazardous for he declined accepting it.

The celebrated singer, Garat, is another example. He was the pupil of nature, and perfected the gifts he had received from her by assiduous and unremitting application. Yet, with all his abilities, he was never able to sing a single bar at sight ; and happy, perhaps, it was for the art that he never attained this mechanical capability. It is true he was obliged to labor, and yet when once he had become thoroughly penetrated with the spirit and character of a composition, his expression was even more forcible than the feeling of the author in the very moment of inspiration. Few artists have yet appeared to rival his admirable manner of singing compositions of every kind and in every style. "I allow," observed some one to the great Sacchini, "that Garat sings well, but then he does not know music." "Sir, he is music itself," was the reply of this fine composer. The celebrated Italian singer, Viganoni, was also once heard to say of Garat, "This Frenchman possesses a more original taste than the Italians themselves."

The author of these remarks once heard an expression from Garat, which struck him very forcibly. "Others," said he, "attain the song by means of the notes, but I attain the notes by means of the song." These remarkable words might furnish an admirable text for some useful remarks on the true art of singing. In a word, with respect to Garat, he was all instinct for music. When he sang, so completely did he conquer all difficulties as regarded the notes, that he stamped every composition with its true character, and astonished even the composer himself by the delicate shades of feeling and sentiment which he had the happy art of imparting to it.

Sebastian Bach used to call those performers at sight who never

hesitated to play off whatever was placed before them, whatever its difficulties might be, *kussars of the harpsichord*.

By the way, the mention of the name of this great composer recalls to my mind an anecdote relative to him, which bears immediately upon the subject before us, and which, if our note-grinders, of whatever description they may be, are at all capable of reflection, will afford them ample room for exercising it.

"Sebastian Bach," says Dr. Forkel, "had such an admirable facility in reading and executing the compositions of others (which, indeed, were all easier than his own), that he once said to an acquaintance, while he lived at Weimar, that he really believed he could play every thing at first sight without hesitating. He was, however, mistaken, and the friend to whom he had thus expressed his opinion, convinced him of it before a week had elapsed. He invited him to breakfast, and upon the desk of his instrument laid, among other pieces, one which at the first glance appeared to be very trifling. Bach came, and, according to his custom, went immediately to the instrument, partly to play and partly to look over the music that appeared on the desk. While he was turning over and performing what was laid there, his friend went into the next room to prepare breakfast. In a few minutes Bach got to the piece which was destined to make him change his opinion and began to play it. But he had not proceeded far when he came to a passage at which he stopped. He looked at it, began anew, and again stopped at the same notes. 'No,' cried he to his friend, who was laughing to himself in the next room, and at the same time going away from the instrument, 'No! one cannot play every thing at first sight; it is not possible!'" *Musical World*.

ON SOLEMNITY IN MUSIC

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

The idea of solemnity is nearly synonymous with that of elevation; for it also refers to the elevation of our mind to the highest object which it is able to conceive. The expression is therefore derived from our religious worship, which always must have the character of solemnity, and which, therefore, generally is called upon, where that character is intended to be stamped upon any important event, such as processions, festivals, and so forth.

Every thing which gives our mind a serious and elevating disposition, is therefore generally called solemn. It is not utterly necessary, that complete silence should accompany it; even very noisy events may be very solemn; for instance, the chime of bells, only they must not divert the mind, but must direct it in all its energy and life to the object of the solemnity. From this reason, those philosophers

who, in their doctrine of æsthetics, did not admit the idea of solemnity in music at all, have found much opposition. The silence of night, or the perfect quiet, which they state to be a prominent characteristic, has certainly something very solemn, but it is only a vigorous means, to put the mind into a disposition corresponding to solemnity; but it is not in itself solemnity.

Solemn music, therefore, where it can be done, makes use of such means as these; its melody likes to float, if possible, in soft and less penetrating lower notes, as for instance, in the choral; but music may be solemn, even where this is not the case; if it only elevates the mind and gives it a serious disposition. This will be done, if it observes great simplicity of melody and harmony, without either being very predominant, if it moves in slow time and in long, well-connected rhythms. Thus, the second piece in Bethoven's symphonia Eroica, the first finale of Mozart's opera of Titus, the chorus "God of Israel," in Mehul's opera of Joseph, are all specimens of true solemnity. Generally, however, the character of quiet, of soft sweet tones is combined with it, as for instance, in the Agnus Dei in Mozart's Requiem, in the chorus of the priests in his "Magic Flute," in the choruses of the priestesses of Vesta in Spontini's opera (in this latter the character of solemnity is almost entirely superseded by that of mere sweetness, on account of the very perceptible predominance of the melody) in the chorus at the sacrifice of the priestesses in Gluck's "Iphigenia." The effect of truly solemn music on the mind is nearly the same as that of elevated or sublime music; it leads to the idea of the infinite—to God.

CONCERTS.

We are obliged to postpone our Concert Report from want of room, for which we are the more sorry since we had several Concerts of uncommon interest; and we shall have to refer again in particular to the last concert of the Academy of Music, which most brilliantly closed their season, and to that of Mr. Paggi, who developed a power on that most difficult instrument, the Oboe, of which but few amateurs among us have had any idea hitherto.